

# St. Johns American Heritage River Navigator News

The St. Johns River  
An American Heritage River

Volume 1, Issue 2

## Strategic Planning Workshop Examines AHR Roles, Representation

An all day workshop was held at DeBary Hall south of Deland for the St. Johns American Heritage River Initiative Steering Committee on August 16. The group of about 20 participants met at 9 a.m. to re-evaluate past goals, the Partnership Agreement, our mission and vision statements, progress to date and possible changes



in focus or roles of various elements of the leadership structure.

Bob Cambric of the Department of Community Affairs, Tallahassee, ably facilitated the discussions and kept the

group on track.

Attendees considered the role of the Steering Committee, the Basin Advisory Committees and the River Navigator. There was discussion about whether or not to change the mission and vision statements, but no action was taken.

A second session was held during the September 6 quarterly Steering Committee meeting. Having completed the evaluation of roles already, the ~25 participants spent two hours reviewing the Partnership Agreement (PA) signed at the designation of the St. Johns as an American Heritage River.

The PA, which describes the structure and function of the

St. Johns AHRI, was signed by Mayor John Delaney, and John H. Hankinson, Jr., then Regional Administrator of the USEPA for Region 4 (southeast). The original is available online at [www.epa.gov/rivers](http://www.epa.gov/rivers) under the St. Johns river.

Several additional organizations likely will be represented on the St. Johns River AHRI when the new PA is signed. These may include the North East and East Central Florida Regional Planning Councils, the Florida Park Service, and a corporate representative. A subcommittee is now drafting bylaws and considering the establishment of a non-profit organization under the AHRI.



DeBary Hall, Deland

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## Steering Committee Meets

The quarterly meeting of the St. Johns AHRI Steering Committee took place on Friday, September 6 on the Rivership Romance in Sanford. Bob Hopkins, a member of the Riverfest committee, hosted the meeting on his vessel to allow members to see part of the river they

rarely visit, and to enjoy lunch while working.

While aboard the boat, the committee heard reports from the Middle and Upper Basin Advisory Committees, and Eagle Productions, the company that is producing a video about the St. Johns. Presentations from the Flor-

ida Dept. of Community Affairs and Coastal America had to be rescheduled. Strategic planning continued in the afternoon at the dockside Best Western hotel.

The next Steering Committee meeting will be held on December 6 at the Palatka headquarters of the St. Johns River Water Management District.

## Funding Sought/Received

Bill Belville (writer), Gary Monroe (DBCC photographer) and Mallory O'Connor (Sante Fe CC professor) continue writing their NEH grant proposal for the St. Johns River art and artifacts project. They delayed its submission until April to develop a more competitive proposal. The project now includes a museum exhibit that will likely travel to Alabama and Georgia, in addition to the original book idea that will be the catalogue for the exhibit, and a facsimile exhibit that will travel up and down the St. Johns River.

A Watershed Assistance Grant proposal was submitted by the River Navigator for support of the River Summit. Selections will be made in November and

funds provided in December by USEPA.

The Upper Basin is developing a proposal to submit for funding to the USEPA's Watershed Initiative. These projects must be focused on improving water quality and may be funded up to \$1.3M. The governor must nominate projects.

The City of Jacksonville plans to submit a proposal to the USEPA and USACE under the "Urban Rivers" restoration program. This is a national pilot program to foster more collabora-



St. Johns River at Piccolata Point

tion between the two federal agencies and assist local communities.

Funds were provided by the National Park Service to the East Central Florida Regional Planning Council to develop a traveling display for the Eco-Heritage Corridor.

The North East Florida Regional Planning Council has received funding from FLA/USA to purchase software to maintain and update the Eco-Heritage Corridor website ([www.floridariver.org](http://www.floridariver.org)) in-house. This moves the responsibility for website maintenance from CDM to the NEFRPC.

## Middle and Upper Basin Advisory Committees Meet

The Middle Basin Advisory Committee met on August 27, at Gemini Springs near Deland. In attendance were many members of the Volusia County Council. Councilwoman Pat Northey opened the meeting with an update on the St. Johns AHRI and an introduction of the new River Navigator, Anne Keller. Keller provided a status report on the River Summit, Riverfest and other recently initiated activities. The Committee was presented with a topographic map in clay made by Kate Swiderski, a sixth grade student from Sanford. Councilwoman Northey lent the map to

the River Navigator for use in presentations. Robert King, Friends of Lake Jesup, reported that the COE project to enlarge the connection between the lake and the St. Johns River is progressing very well.

Led by Barbara Meyer, the Upper Basin Advisory Committee met on August 28 at the Viera Government Center. Commissioner Sue Carlson was unable to attend due to sched-



Councilwoman Northey, Kate Swiderski, and mother, Mary

uling conflicts. After introductions all around, the group spent most of its time on two topics—Riverfest activities and a project to submit for the USEPA Watershed Initiative. After lively discussions and many good ideas, the 15 people present chose four activities to develop for the May 2003 Riverfest. Barbara was to work with other staff to identify a water quality project to submit to USEPA for funding. They would like to get funding for stormwater treatment. The deadline is November 21.

## Artist Paints the St. Johns River

Nature painter Keith Martin Johns, a third generation Floridian and resident of the Tarpon Springs area, has turned his attention to the St. Johns River. Having recently completed works from the Suwannee River, Keith decided to portray the beauty, history and unique character of the St. Johns River while traveling on a houseboat provided by Mt. Dora art gallery owner Joe Sabatini, a native New Yorker. The

unique collaboration between these two men will result in more than 20 oil paintings from the Middle Basin area. Keith and Linda Johns will continue their travels along the river later this year painting as they go. Information on the painting tour and a silent auction of the paintings in November can be found at: [www.europagallery.net](http://www.europagallery.net). Keith would like to paint the other 13

American Heritage Rivers as a life long project culminating in a book. We will try to facilitate that effort if we can.



## St. Johns River Summit 2003 Planning Continues—AHRI Involved

In an effort to focus attention on the need for habitat and water quality restoration in the St. Johns River, and the benefits of trail systems to the area, Mayor John Delaney of Jacksonville announced a follow-up to the 1997 River Summit held in Jacksonville. The original meeting focused on the Lower St. Johns River. In 2003, the Summit, to be held again in Jacksonville, will include the entire river. The first day of the River Summit, January 13, will deal with trails, greenways and blueways and is being organized by the AHRI. Lunch, a keynote speaker and exhibits will precede afternoon breakout sessions on the benefits of trail systems to the St. Johns River, how to de-

velop and implement trails and greenways projects, and finally examples of regional systems from other areas. A panel discussion on local and state trails efforts along the St. Johns and a wrap-up session will end the day. Designation of the St. Johns River Trail is a hoped for result of the day's meeting.

On January 14, the focus will shift to water quality and quantity. Breakfast will start the day, with opening remarks from Mayor Delaney and a panel discussion on the state of the resource preceding a break. Water quality challenges will be discussed, followed by a keynote speaker during lunch. The afternoon will offer a set of breakout ses-



*Jacksonville's waterfront*

sions on nonpoint and point source pollution, bacteria, aquatic habitat, water supply, TMDLs and creating a comprehensive restoration plan. Specific project and legislative funding priorities will be established at meeting's end.

## AHRI Riverfest 2003 News Fun, Learning and Challenge

Several meetings have been held in recent weeks to continue planning for AHRI Riverfest 2003. This celebration of the St. Johns River from its headwaters to the ocean is scheduled to take place from May 10-26 next year.

A number of events, scheduled each year during these weeks, will be included in advertisements and press information. However, some new activities will be added. A bass tournament is planned for Sanford, an art festival in Jacksonville, a fishing tournament, environmental fair and family hike in the

Upper Basin, and a library celebration of the St. Johns will take place in cities all along the river. Other new events are being developed and may include a bike race, birdwatching, a river cleanup, geo-caching (a modern treasure hunt using GPS), a naturalist led pontoon boat and/or canoe trip and river educational activities.

The idea is to increase citizens' awareness of and connection to the St. Johns River. It will be fun, educational and an opportunity to meet new people. If you want to join the fun or add an



*Riverfest Planning Committee in Deland*

event, contact your local Basin Chair or Anne Keller (see below).

## Basin Contacts

**Contacts:** Upper Basin—Brevard County Commissioner Sue Carlson @ 321-633-2044; Middle Basin—Volusia County Councilwoman Pat Northey @ 386-736-5920, ext. 5247; Putnam County Commissioner Nancy Harris @ 386-698-2776; Anne Keller, River Navigator @ 904-396-9141, cell—561-818-6119, [keller.anne@epa.gov](mailto:keller.anne@epa.gov).

The St. Johns American Heritage

River Initiative is a community-based effort to improve and protect the river, support economic development and preserve cultural/heritage sites. Basin committees need participants, ideas and energy. Each Basin Advisory Committee identifies its own environmental, economic, cultural or historical projects to be completed as part of the St. Johns AHRI Strategic plan.

## New Hires to Help AHRI

Kyia Tiffany was recently hired by the SJRWMD via a grant from the USEPA to provide office support for the AHRI. Very adept in the office and with meeting coordination, Kyia will work closely with the Navigator.

Amanda Loach, working for the NEFRPC under another USEPA grant, will support the Eco-Heritage Planning Committee, maintain the website, update site lists and do outreach activities. She is a graduate student at UNF.

## The St. Johns River An American Heritage River

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The St. Johns River was designated an American Heritage River by the President in 1998. Local, State and Federal groups signed an agreement on cooperation following that designation, and the first River Navigator was selected in 1999.

The St. Johns AHR is focused on protecting cultural/heritage sites, improving water quality, and developing economic opportunities along the river.

Three Basin Advisory Committees are comprised of local citizens and elected officials who then represent their area on the Steering Committee, chaired by Mayor John Delaney of Jacksonville, the early proponent of the designation.



## Speakers Available

A number of people who are actively involved in the St. Johns American Heritage River Initiative are available to speak to nature groups, tourist development or chamber of commerce meetings, students or other gatherings where community topics are discussed.

We have naturalists, cultural and heritage experts, folks involved with greenways and trails, water quality experts and writers who would be happy to talk with you about the AHRI, the St. Johns River and many other subjects. Please contact the River Navigator or your Basin Advisory Committee chair (See "Basin Advisory Chair Contacts", p. 3) for more information.

## St. Johns River Facts

The St. Johns River originates west of Vero Beach in marshes teeming with



*Downtown Jacksonville*

wading birds, snail kites, roseate spoonbills, apple snails, pond lilies, water lotus, duck potato, bladderwort and sawgrass, and dotted with tree islands. The tannin-stained river flows north for over 310 miles, joined by numerous tributaries including the Wekiva and Oklawaha Rivers.

The St. Johns River was called "Welaka" by the Seminole Indians, a term which means "river of lakes". Indeed, in the upper reaches of the St. Johns, the river forms several lakes

(e.g., Hell n' Blazes, Sawgrass) before it forms a channel, then passes through Lakes Harney, Monroe and George and assumes a serpentine shape for the duration of its length.

Tidally influenced for a hundred miles upstream, the St. Johns harbors many marine fish that inhabit brackish or salt water. Sharks have been observed as far south as Lake George, particularly in years with low rainfall that decreases the river's flow and allows salt water to move farther upstream.

## Upcoming Meetings

St. Johns River Trail Meeting—October 31 at Buckman Lock near Palatka. Call Anne Keller.

Steering Committee—December 6, SJRWMD, Palatka., 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.